UNITED NATIONS

World Chronicle

PROGRAMME: No. 524, recorded 22 October 1993

GUEST: **S.R. INSANALLY**
President, 48th General Assembly
Permanent Representative of Guyana to the United Nations

JOURNALISTS: Bhaskar Menon, *The Times of India*
René Slama, Agence France-Presse

MODERATOR: Michael Littlejohns

48TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

S.R. Insanally, President of the 48th United Nations General Assembly, discusses the role this important organ of the World Organization plays in a rapidly changing world where interdependency has become a reality. World leaders attending the current session have expressed their commitment both to development and to Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali's "Agenda for Peace". President Insanally believes that the time has come to expand the Security Council to reflect the growing membership of the United Nations.

WORLD CHRONICLE is produced by the Media Division, Department of Public Information, United Nations, New York, NY 10017, U.S.A.

Duration: 28:00"
Executive Producer: Kamil Taha
Director: Ivan Stoynov
Production Assistants: Ellen McGuffie\Priscilla Kotey

ANNOUNCER: From United Nations Headquarters in New York, this is **World Chronicle**, an unedited interview programme about major global issues. Here now to introduce our guest is the host of today's **World Chronicle**.

LITTLEJOHNS: I'm Michael Littlejohns, and this is **World Chronicle**. Every September the United Nations General Assembly opens its regular session. World leaders converge on the headquarters of the world organization to state their country's views on a wide range of international, regional and national issues.

This year the General Assembly opened its forty-eighth regular session with a record number of items on its agenda. As president of this year's General Assembly, our guest, S. R. Insanally presides over the meetings. Ambassador Insanally is also the Permanent Representative of Guyana to the United Nations. Joining me today to speak with President Insanally are Bhaskar Menon of the *Times of India* and Rene Slama of Agence France-Presse. Mr. President, welcome to World Chronicle.

Mr. President, I'm sure that every president of this world body has goals for the session over which he presides. What are your goals for this forty eighth session?

INSANALLY: May I say the outset, how pleased I am to have this opportunity of speaking to the viewers of World Chronicle. It is important in my view that the peoples of the world develop an awareness and support of United Nations. I think without that, that vital element, our work will be very sterile.

And I would encourage the media to try to move away from the direction of sensationalism to develop an interest in world governance and what we are doing in the United Nations. Having said that, I in response to your question, I hope to pursue during the life of my presidency, the promotion of an agenda for development.

To complement the agenda for peace which as you know is being subject to implementation, having been submitted by the Secretary General, there is a tendency we feel, that while peace is extremely important, you must have this underlying lay of development without which I don't think peace can ever prosper.

And therefore I would hope to avail myself of what I see to be a new mood to restart a dialogue on development. I was very encouraged by the views of many of the leaders who came to the General Assembly this year, particularly those from the developing countries, from Europe and elsewhere who have expressed a commitment to development and believe that the time has come when we need to insure that there is a balance between an agenda for peace and an agenda for development.

READEX
FICHE

LITTLEJOHNS: A few years ago, Mr. President, we had what was called at the time the North-South dialogue. The North being the industrialized countries which are mainly in the northern hemisphere and the south, the developing countries of the southern hemisphere mainly.

Whatever happened to that dialogue and is there a chance of reviving it, do you think?

INSANALLY: The theme of the North-South dialogue I think over the years has perhaps excited some criticism. And I prefer to avoid that description of what we want to go into. I think that we need to explore the new mood. The world has changed tremendously, the concept of interdependencé I think is being translated into reality. Gradually in all the fora, I think there's a willingness to have a dialogue on development.

But we want to eschew the kind of sterile confrontation that was characteristic of that period that you refer to, when the North-South dialogue was much in vogue. I think we on both sides now, the developed and the developing world, we want with a realistic approach and on the basis of interdependence, to address the vital issues of poverty and all the various ills that confront us today.

SLAMA: Don't you think that very often the General Assembly is bogging endless talk of procedures instead of dealing with truly important matters, substantial matters?

INSANALLY: Regrettably I think some time has to be spent on insuring that the organization that we have is made more adequate to dealing with the issues before us. And to that extent, we will have to address the question of reform, restructuring procedures to allow for a productive debate.

But I agree with you entirely. I think we need to focus on some issues. The more important issues rather to have a cluttered agenda and with a sense of purpose, try to have a political debate which brings about a political will that will allow for forward progress on those issues.

MENON: Don't you think that in the debate that you mentioned and the way that development has been dealt with, that, if you look at what the developing countries have said, there's almost a sense of despair. Most African countries, in fact all of them, said that they're doing really badly. That the international system discriminates against them. You look at Latin American countries, they're all complaining, including your particular subregion.

They're fairly desperate. Where do you see the optimism in here?

INSANALLY: Well, there is reason for despair. I think all the analyses, all the reports show that in Africa for example, and in our own region of Latin America and the Caribbean, there is retrogression. At the same time in our region, there are some signs of growth, but it's unequal growth.

And the fundamental problems remain. Lack of access to markets. Really addressing the problems of poverty, the social infrastructure to really bring us up to some level of development. Hopefully, as I said, there's a realization now among the developed countries that something needs to be done. You cannot have a situation where all the agencies that are engaged in the development process, for example UNDP and UNICEF, who are all complaining that there is a gradual diminution of resources. A distraction of those resources towards other areas which would perhaps even paint a bleaker picture for the developing countries. As I said, I would like nevertheless to be optimistic and I did glean some optimism from the debate that developed countries realize that it is not a zero sum game; that we do have to address these problems on a mutually satisfactory basis.

LITTLEJOHNS: But you're looking for more development aid or greater access to industrial countries' markets or an increase in commodity prices. How is this going to happen?

INSANALLY: It can be a combination of all those that you have mentioned. Certainly the situation in developing countries still warrants a greater dose of overseas development assistance although the signs are that, that is gradually drying up.

Or if not drying up, being conditioned to an unacceptable degree. But essentially, to insure sustained and sustainable development, you will need to go beyond aid, to trade, to opening up of markets, and in fact encouraging the developing countries to participate. At the Uruguay round has been extremely slow and unproductive.

LITTLEJOHNS: The tariffs negotiations.

INSANALLY: Exactly. And the protectionists are still rampant in the developed countries, so we can't have it both ways.

MENON: In this situation, what will an agenda for development do?

INSANALLY: It would focus on the issues and in much the same fashion as the Agenda for Peace sought to identify varying proposals, bring to the attention of the world community, a set of ideas, practicable ideas eschewing the jargon of previous years

but to get practical areas of cooperation that might be translated into some firm strategy for development in the future.

SLAMA: Let's move to another subject. Do you expect any move during this session on the question of enlarging the Security Council to Germany, Japan and other countries?

INSANALLY: That is an idea I believe whose time has come. Since the seventies, I recall distinctly India had started a move to have that issue considered. We were in fact cosponsors of the resolution. But the time has come I believe in the aftermath of the cold war, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, I think the world in which we are now living is completely distinct from the world when the council was created in 1945.

The Council then was representative of a certain set of circumstances where you had victors and vanquished. Those words still are enshrined in the Charter. At the time also you had membership of the United Nations of fifty one members.

Now you have an astronomical number of a hundred and eighty four. Surely the circumstances warrant a re-examination of the composition of the Security Council in terms of expansion, of making its operations more open and transparent and in fact, making the council more adequate to fulfilling its role as a guarantor of international peace and security.

MENON: What's happened with the end of the cold war though is that there's been a kind of certain identity crisis in the assembly itself because the Security Council has taken on such a strong role. Badly composed and unbalanced in its composition as it is, it's taken on a kind of leadership position within the UN system. And the Assembly itself has been left groping for a role. How do you think that will work itself out?

INSANALLY: As I hinted earlier on, we are in fact going through a transition. These remarkable circumstances which we are witnessing, many of them completely unanticipated, have faced the United Nations and ourselves as individual nations with set of imponderables. We are forced to react largely on an ad hoc basis. I cannot blame the Council for some of its operations because it is being approached.

It is being requested by member states to intervene in certain areas and like the Assembly, we are being asked to deal with a new situation that is challenging our imagination. My hope is that we can quickly galvanize our resources to react in a more deliberate fashion to be able to devise a strategy that is based on a medium and long term view that will cater for the needs of today's world. And that will tend to avoid the contretemps that we are faced with in recent times over the situations in Bosnia, Somalia

and more latterly Haiti. In my view, this is all a result of the uncertainties that have cropped up in the wake of the dissolution of the old order.

MENON: Isn't there a difference in here between the developed and the developing countries instead of a difference in perspective?

INSANALLY: I daresay there are different perspectives but we are one I think in trying to build an order that has an equitable representation for all our countries. I think we should realize now if we are serious about the concept of international cooperation, that we all have a part to play. And you cannot have that hierarchy, that balance or power structure that existed in the past. I think we now have to establish new rules of the game if we are indeed serious in talking about the new international economic order and I assume that we are. It cannot be the same old story of a pursuit of selfish national interest. I think most countries realize now that the line between nationalism and internationalism is now very very thin. And the problems of homelessness, of disease, despair are within the domain of the developed countries as much as the developing countries.

So I hope a sense of reality pervades and that leaders of the world, both in the developed and developing countries realize that it is to our mutual interest to work towards some kind of universal governance, especially in those areas which have international repercussions.

MENON: But if you look at the way the Assembly's functioned historically. It's always functional on the basis of groups. Group of '77, the developing countries, the western group. But all group situations seems to be dissolving because the group of '77 no longer has the same solidarity.

The western group and eastern group are indistinguishable. Where does this leave the Assembly?

INSANALLY: Well, I've always considered the groups as an invaluable mechanism for distilling consensus. It is important that regions have the opportunity to deliberate on the issues that concern them and in gradually build up a consensus so that at the assembly level, you then have a concerted effort to devise a common position.

So the groups have been - I don't think they are moribund. I think they still function effectively. The Group of '77 is very much involved in the development agenda. The Non- Aligned Movement also, and here I'm going beyond your regional groups, they have also in trying to respond to the new circumstances, they are now trying to find a new role, a new identity that will be more responsive to the present circumstance. And that is a healthy sign. I therefore don't share your pessimism that the groups are now

moribund or no longer relevant. Rather I think they need to be revived and resuscitated in such a way that they can come to grips with the new situation that faces all of us.

LITTLEJOHNS: This is World Chronicle. Our guest is Ambassador S.R. Insanally, President of the forth eighth session of the United Nations General Assembly.

LITTLEJOHNS: Rene, would you like to open a new area of discussion.

SLAMA: Every year the General Assembly adopts several resolutions against Israel. Do you think that this year after the Israeli-PLO Agreement, there could be a consensus not to readopt them?

INSANALLY: Well, the Israeli-Palestinian Accords that were signed in Washington excited a great deal of jubilation and I have no reason to doubt that, that spirit of optimism will now pervade the work of the General Assembly and more specifically, the committees which deal with those issues. So I am encouraged to think that the mood that prevailed in Washington will find reflection in the work of the assembly's committees and its resolutions. I have no reason to think that the language will not reflect this new language of harmony and accord that was struck in the recent negotiations.

SLAMA: On the South African question, do you expect also any new move after the resolution which was adopted recently?

INSANALLY: That resolution was a crowning point I think in the work of the Assembly. It was also remarkable for its speechlessness. It was adopted without any speeches and I hopc that, that is a good augury of things to come. Of course the Assembly will have to be ready to respond to the evolution of the situation on the ground in South Africa.

And as we did for Namibia, when Namibia was on the verge of independence, I was then a member of the Council for Namibia. We sought to insure that the transition was very smooth. Similarly here the various organs of the United Nations which are concerned more directly with South Africa and the assembly, will have to evaluate the situation.

See how best we can assist South Africa and indeed Palestine, to take their proper place in the family of nations. We therefore have to insure that the peoples of Palestine and South Africa are equipped to really take their place at the United Nations in the proper fashion.

LITTLEJOHNS: What can be done about the resolutions in both areas which are now outdated. I mean can they be revised, can they be struck off the books, so to speak? What can happen?

INSANALLY: Oh, yes, I think there is precedent for that. I think the resolution within recent times on anti-semitism, which was reviewed - the Assembly is master of its own rules and can take whatever action it feels is necessary in a particular circumstances.

So on a case by case basis, we will want to review those resolutions which as you say might warrant reexamination to see what action needs to be taken.

LITTLEJOHNS: The agenda item relating to South Africa I think has already been changed, has it not? Used to be the question of apartheid, now it's something different. I mean apartheid has been more or less abandoned, in fact has been abandoned in South Africa. That's had an effect on the agenda item, hasn't it?

INSANALLY: This is an indication of the change I am speaking of. You know we have to see wherever we need to make corresponding changes to fit the reality of today. It is of course a gradual process and we are in fact looking now as we look at the agenda, the entire agenda, to see how much we can make it a little more agile, more - a little closer to reality. So this is a gradual process which will take place in all fields, especially in those areas such as you suggest in South Africa where changes are occurring very rapidly.

LITTLEJOHNS: The South African delegation has not been participating in the business of the General Assembly since 1974. Do you think that this session might bring them back?

INSANALLY: I would hope that during this session or if not, during the life of my presidency, that South Africa in fact will regain its rightful place in the United Nations.

LITTLEJOHNS: With a multiracial --

INSANALLY: With a multiracial, democratic government. I am sure the world is ready to welcome South Africa of that sort back into its fold and I hope as I said for me, that would be a crowning point of my presidency if it could happen during these coming months.

MENON: Moving to the area of UN reform, you've set up a number of working groups, a working group within the General Assembly which is to consider reform in various areas of the UN and you've met with the Ambassadors of Britain and the United States specifically on this matter. What readout do you get? How do you think the process will go?

INSANALLY: As you suggest, there are three major areas where I think the Assembly wants to engage in reform and restructuring. 1) as we've already discussed, area of the Security Council. 2) the economic and social sectors. That is to say the

councils of these various bodies, to make them more adequate to the times as I said. And thirdly, an area which you will understand interests me personally, the revitalization of the General Assembly. In some cases it may be a resuscitation of existing working groups. In others, as in the case of the Security Council reform, we will need to pursue further consultations.

But I think there is a large measure of consensus that all these working groups should be open ended to allow for full participation and they should work as speedily as possible to secure these much needed reforms. I think the world is expecting a United Nations now that is much leaner, much more open and much more capable of dealing with the many problems before them.

But I don't want to anticipate the outcome of these discussions which I'm having, but I would like to say I hope within a week or two, I'll be in a position to announce the formation and composition of those working groups.

MENON: Do you have proposal yourself to improve the work of the General Assembly?

INSANALLY: I do. We are looking now at the whole series of proposals. As you know, sometimes old habits die hard. I think we will have to test the waters and see to what degree the Assembly is responsive to change. There are two proposals that come to my mind immediately. One is as you yourselves have suggested, a look at the agenda to see whether we cannot make it a much more manageable agenda. Of course, the number of items in the agenda appear formidable but I venture to say that in a sense they reflect two things. They reflect in a way the importance that individual member states attach to the United Nations. Otherwise they would not bother to put this agenda before the consideration of the United Nations. And secondly, I think again recalling the fact that the Assembly now stands at the membership of a hundred eighty four, the areas of concern are enlarged. And the United Nations if it is to be truly universal and democratic has to cater to those concerns.

MENON: When you say universal and democratic, surely you have to set some conditions because in the General Assembly you have Monaco with a few thousand people and you have China at the other end. You have countries which are still barely out of the Stone Age and you have the United States which is a nuclear and space power. How can there be a democracy within this very disparate group?

INSANALLY: Well, I didn't say equality in that sense but equality of the rights of membership is important and in that sense, there can be no distinction between the position of a major country and say a small island in the Caribbean. I think that is the

droit acquis of the United Nations and until the world changes that charter, we have to operate on that basis.

SLAMA: But is it easy for a small country to play a role at the UN? You represent a small country.

INSANALLY: Exactly.

SLAMA: But is it easy, was it easy for you to play a role here?

INSANALLY: It is not the easiest of tasks to make sure, but I don't think the talent and ideas are the prerogative of the mighty nations. I think small nations - and since you mention it, I will remind you that some of the great ideas of the United Nations came from smallish nations.

You had "The Law of the Sea" which is born from Malta. Small nations can take the initiative. Liechtenstein is now advancing the question of self determination. So ideas are not the sole prerogative of large nations. Obviously they have the resources, they have the capability and one must accept that. But I think we all are, on the basis of the Charter have the right to participate to the degree that we are able to do so. And as I said, we are anxious to make the agenda a little more responsive to our needs and I would like to work in that direction.

It's not easy and if I'm to bring you back to your question, I would suggest that we might go the route of maybe tri-annualizing or bi-annualizing some of these items so that with the process of time, we can appreciate their importance. And I suggest by a process of attrition, many of them will disappear. My other area of interest is to get the Assembly more interested in the work. If we have lost a role I think in some measure it is by default and I give you an example. We have the reports of the Security Council, the reports of the ICJ, of ECOSOC (Economic and Social Council).

LITTLEJOHNS: International Court of Justice.

INSANALLY: ICJ which are simply noted, have been simply noted in the past. If we in the Assembly are serious of taking a more prominent role, there's nothing to preclude us from pronouncing ourselves on these areas. And without intruding on the competence of these organs, because the Charter is very clear on the competence of the respective agencies. But we do have the right I feel, under the Charter, to make some pronouncements which hopefully will guide the work of these bodies and minimize the risk of accusation that we are all working at opposite ends.

LITTLEJOHNS: So you're suggesting that the General Assembly might criticize what the Security Council is doing or the World Court and perhaps make recommendations for change?

INSANALLY: I don't say criticize, but the Charter allows the assembly for pronouncing views in the area of peace and security. Apart from article -- I think it's article 12 which prevents Assembly from discussing a matter which is under discussion by the Council. The Charter gives the Assembly the right to pronounce itself on several of these issues.

LITTLEJOHNS: Mr. President, that's all the time we have. Thank you for joining us on this edition of World Chronicle. Our guest has been Ambassador S. R. Insanally, president of the forty eighth session of the United Nations General Assembly. He was interviewed by Bhaskar Menon of the *Times of India* and Rene Slama of Agence France-Presse. I'm Michael Littlejohns. Thank you for joining us. We invite you to be with us for the next edition of World Chronicle.

* * * * *

Transcripts of the programme may be obtained free of charge by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to: **World Chronicle**, United Nations, Room S-827, New York, New York, 10017, USA.

World Chronicle is broadcast worldwide, and features guests whose work is concerned with major global issues. This programme is a public affairs presentation of this station from United Nations Radio and Television.

Additional information material about the United Nations can be obtained by writing to the Public Inquiries Unit, United Nations, Room GA-57, New York, New York, 10017, USA, or the UN Information Centre in your country.